

Dora de Houghton Carrington:

An Inventory of Her Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Carrington, Dora de Houghton, 1893-1932
Title	Dora Carrington Collection
Dates:	1912-1965
Extent	4 boxes (1.67 linear feet)
Abstract	Correspondence makes up the bulk of the Dora Carrington Collection, supplemented by a small book of woodcut prints by Carrington and a few poems and essays by other authors.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-00698
Languages	English, and Hebrew.
Access	Open for research, except permission is required to view originals of letters in folders 1.8 and 2.4 due to their fragile condition.

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases and gifts, 1966-1976 (R3311, R7293)
Processed by	Chelsea Jones, 1998
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Dora de Houghton Carrington (1893-1932) was the fourth of five children born to Samuel Carrington and Charlotte Houghton. In 1902 the family moved to Bedford, where Carrington attended a girls' high school which emphasized sports, music, and drawing over more mundane subjects. The teachers encouraged Carrington's drawing and her parents paid for her to attend extra drawing classes in the afternoons. In 1910 she entered the Slade School of Art in London. Following the tradition of the co-ed school, Carrington dropped her first name and was known simply as Carrington. She also started a new fashion at the school, along with her good friends Dorothy Brett and Barbara Hiles who attended the Slade at the same time, by cutting her hair into a kind of bowl cut. It was also at the Slade that she met Mark Gertler, a fellow artist who would pursue her romantically for several years.

Carrington acquitted herself well at the Slade, winning several prizes and moving quickly through the courses. She left school in 1914 and returned to her parents' home to decide on her next step. She enjoyed being in the country but felt stifled by the lack of intellectual stimulation in general and her mother in particular. Gertler introduced her to Lady Ottoline Morrell, and thus into the Bloomsbury group of artists and writers. It was while visiting Morrell at Garsington Manor in 1915 that Carrington was introduced to Lytton Strachey, a writer and confirmed homosexual. Gertler, feeling that Strachey could act as a safe go-between for himself, encouraged their friendship. To his dismay, Carrington fell inexplicably and deeply in love with Strachey, a love that would last for the rest of her life and cause her to follow him from life into death.

In 1917 Carrington's relationship with Gertler ended and when Strachey rented Mill House, Tidmarsh, she moved in with him. Carrington met Ralph Partridge, an Oxford friend of her younger brother Noel, in 1918. Partridge fell in love with Carrington and, accepting that she was still in love with Strachey and would not give up her platonic relationship or living arrangements with him, married her in 1921. In 1924 he and Strachey purchased the lease to Ham Spray House, near Hungerford, and all three lived out their lives there.

Over the next eight years Carrington divided her time between domestic chores, caring for Strachey whose health was erratic, and her art work. She painted on almost any medium she could find including glass, tiles, pub signs, and the walls of friends' homes; she also made woodcuts for Hogarth Press and did some leather work. She had two well-known affairs, one with Gerald Brenan, an army friend of Partridge's, and the other with a sailor, Beakus Penrose. In 1926 Partridge formed an attachment to Frances Marshall, ending his marriage with Carrington in spirit, if not in law, but maintained his role of manager for Ham Spray House, visiting most weekends.

In November 1931 Strachey became suddenly and violently ill. Doctors fluctuated between diagnoses of typhoid fever and ulcerative colitis, but his condition -- stomach cancer -- was not accurately diagnosed until an autopsy was performed. Round the clock nurses were hired and various treatments were tried. In late December he took a turn for the worse and on December 20 Carrington attempted suicide by shutting herself in the

garage with the car running. Partridge rescued her and she recovered enough to spend the last few days of Strachey's life taking her turn watching over him. On January 21, 1932, Strachey died. The greatest concern of their friends now became preventing Carrington from killing herself; arrangements were made to keep her occupied and attended. In March Carrington was planning for a trip to France and her friends began to feel less concern, but she also borrowed a gun from a neighbor, ostensibly to shoot rabbits in her garden. On March 11, 1932, she shot herself fatally. She was found before she died and Ralph Partridge, Frances Marshall, and David Garnett arrived at Ham Spray House in time to say good-bye.

Sources

Carrington: A Life. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989).

Who's Who in Bloomsbury. Alan and Veronica Palmer. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

Scope and Contents

Correspondence makes up the bulk of the Dora Carrington Collection (1912-1965), supplemented by a small book of woodcut prints by Carrington and a few poems and essays by other authors. The collection is organized into three series with materials arranged alphabetically by title or author and chronologically where possible: I. Works, nd (1 folder); II. Correspondence, 1912-1965 (3.5 boxes); and III. Writings by Others, 1949-1964 (.5 box). This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The small Works Series holds a notebook, apparently hand-made, containing about twenty prints of woodcuts made by Carrington.

The Correspondence Series is composed of three subseries: A. Outgoing, 1915-1931 (1 box), B. Incoming, 1912-1932 (2 boxes), and C. Third-Party Correspondence, 1912-1965 (.5 box). Outgoing correspondence is made up of letters Carrington wrote to her friends and family. Many of her letters include drawings and woodcut prints. Particularly well represented are her letters to Noel Carrington and Mark Gertler. Incoming correspondence contains letters Carrington received from friends. Mark Gertler is again well represented with an accumulation of about 150 letters. These letters are divided into two groups: those which were published in his *Selected Letters* (HRC ND 497 G47 A32), edited by Noel Carrington; and those which have not been published. Also present are letters from Henry Lamb, C.R.W. Nevinson, Ralph Partridge, and Albert Rutherford, as well as others. Letters from Augustus John include several poems which are indexed in the Index of Works by Other Authors at the end of this guide. Third-Party Correspondence is composed of letters written by Noel Carrington, Mark Gertler, and Ralph Partridge, as well as others, to other people, some

after Carrington's death. The recipient of many of these letters was Thomas Balston, an art historian. All correspondents can be identified using the Index of Correspondents in this guide.

Several letters from Carrington to Gertler written during 1917 and one letter from Gertler to Carrington, dated Monday, December 1916, are extremely fragile and require special permission to handle. Surrogates are available for general use.

The Works by Others Series is composed of research notes and materials on Mark Gertler gathered by Thomas Balston. Also present is an untitled poem by Gilbert Cannan, and an autobiographical essay by Mark Gertler. Titles are indexed in the Index of Works by Other Authors at the end of this guide.

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center is one Vertical File with a pre-release advertisement and order form for Noel Carrington's book *Carrington, Paintings, Drawings, and Decorations*.

Related Material

- Barrie, J.M
 - Brenan, Gerald
 - Forster, E.M
 - Hutchinson, Mary
 - Huxley, Aldous
 - Morrell, Ottoline
 - Strachey, Lytton
-

Index Terms

Correspondents

Carrington, Noel

Gertler, Marjorie

Gertler, Mark, 1891-1939

John, Augustus, 1878-1961

Lamb, Henry, 1883-1960

Nevinson, C. R. W. (Christopher Richard Wynne), 1889-1946

Partridge, Ralph

Rutherston, Albert Daniel, 1881-1953

Subjects

Strachey, Lytton, 1880-1932

Bloomsbury group

Document Types

Painters -- Great Britain

Women artists -- England

Love letters

Prints

Postcards

Sketches

Woodcuts

Series I. Works, nd

Woodcuts in a small notebook, nd, 20pp

box 1 folder
1

Series II. Correspondence, 1912-1965

Subseries A. Outgoing, 1915-1931

Carrington, Noel, 1916-1931

1916-1917 **box 1 folder 2**1918-1920 **folder 3**1921-1931 **folder 4**Doggart, James, 1925-1931 **folder 5**

Gertler, Mark, 1915-1925, nd

nd **box 1 folder 6**1915-1917 **folder 7**May-June 1917 **folder 8**1918-1925 **folder 9**John, Dorelia, 1927-1928 **folder 10**

Subseries B. Incoming, 1912-1932

Unidentified; A-Z **box 2 folder 1**

Gertler, Mark, 1912-1932, nd

Published letters

1912-1914 **box 2 folder 2**1915-1916 **folder 3**Dec. 1916 **folder 4**1917-1920 **folder 5**1921-1932 **folder 6**

Unpublished letters

fragments of letters **box 2 folder 7**

nd, 1912	folder 8
nd (ca. 1913), 1913-1914	
nd (ca. 1915-1918), 1915-1916	box 3 folder 1
1917-1930	folder 2
John, Augustus, 1928-1932	folder 3
Lamb, Henry, 1928-1932, nd	
nd, 1928	box 3 folder 4
1929-1932	folder 5
Nevinson, C.R.W., 1912-1913	folder 6
Partridge, Ralph, 1919	folder 7
Rutherston, Albert Daniel, 1913-1916	folder 8
Subseries C. Third-Party Correspondence, 1912-1965	
A-Z	box 4 folder 1
Carrington, Noel to Thomas Balston, 1964-1965	folder 2
Gertler, Mark to Thomas Balston, 1926-1939	folder 3
Partridge, Ralph to Noel Carrington, 1916-1921	folder 4

Series III. Writings by Others, 1949-1964

Balston, Thomas, 1949-1964

box 4 folder 5

Cannan, Gilbert, untitled poem, nd

folder 6

Gertler, Mark, "First Memories," typescript, nd, 32pp

folder 7

Dora Carrington Collection--Index of Correspondents

Box and folder numbers are followed by a number in parenthesis which indicates the number of items by that person. A single item is indicated where there is no number in parenthesis following the box and folder number. Where there is correspondence from Dora Carrington, the number in parentheses is followed by the phrase "from Carrington." So in the example:

Carrington, Noel--1.2-4 (55 from Carrington), 4.2 (22)

there are 55 letters from Dora Carrington to Noel Carrington, located in Box 1, Folders 2-4, and 22 letters from Noel Carrington in Box 4, Folder 2.

- The Board of Guardians and Trustees for the Relief of the Jewish Poor--See Jewish Board of Guardians
- Carrington, Noel--1.2-4 (55 from Carrington), 4.2 (22)
- Contemporary Art Society--4.1
- Dennis, Cecelia--4.1
- Doggart, James Hamilton--1.5 (6 from Carrington)
- Gertler, Golda--2.1 (in Hebrew)
- Gertler, Jack--4.1 (2)
- Gertler, Luke--4.1
- Gertler, Marjorie--4.1 (15)
- Gertler, Mark, 1891-1939--1.6-1.9 (155 from Carrington), 2.2-3.2 (331), 4.1 (5), 4.3 (152)
- Hart-Davis, Rupert, Limited--See Rupert Hart-Davis
- Jewish Board of Guardians (London, England)--4.1
- John, Augustus, 1878-1961--3.3 (16)
- John, Dorelia McNeill--1.10 (14 from Carrington)
- Kennedy, George, 1838- --4.1
- Lamb, Henry, 1883-1960--3.4-5 (146), 4.1
- Lawrence, D.H. (David Herbert), 1885-1930--4.1
- Morrell, Philip, 1870- --4.1
- Nevinson, C.R.W. (Christopher Richard Wynne), 1889-1946--3.6 (56)
- Partridge, Ralph--3.7 (6), 4.4 (29)
- Rupert Hart-Davis, Limited--4.1
- Rutherston, Albert Daniel, 1881-1953--3.8 (54)
- The Sanatorium--4.1
- Shearman, Montague, Sir, 1857-1930--2.1
- University College, London--4.1 (2)
- Wardrop, James, d. 1957--4.1

Dora Carrington Collection--Index of Works by Other Authors

- Balston, Thomas
 - Biography of Mark Gertler for *Dictionary of National Biography*--4.5
- Description of *Rabbi and his Grandchild*, by Mark Gertler--4.5
- List of letters borrowed by NLC--4.5
- Notes and critical excerpts re Mark Gertler--4.5
- Research materials re Mark Gertler--4.5

- Cannan, Gilbert
 - "I've -- in the West End..."--4.6

- Gertler, Mark
 - First Memories--4.7

- John, Augustus
 - Ham Spray--3.3
 - "I would come softly through the gloom..."--3.3
 - "If, in having raised your..."--3.3
 - Lines to a Young Lady of Fashion--3.3
 - "Longer than life is mem'ry's tenuous cord..."--3.3
 - Song--3.3
 - "Young Perdita, the gracefulest of girls..."--3.3